



Left: the rich red velvet of Emily Todhunter's living-room walls are dotted with gilt-framed pictures, adding to the warm atmosphere. **Below:** fresh flowers are tucked next to a Greek bust, which is one of her husband's oldest possessions. **Bottom left:** a bust of Manoli's son John, by Sylvia Ciancimino, in front of a painting by Frazer Diesel. **Right:** Emily on the sofa with her twin boys, Aleko and Mikey



AT HOME WITH
emily
todhunter.

She's revamped the private quarters at Sissinghurst and the homes of Imran Khan and Taki. But the interior designer's own maisonette is as family-friendly as it is grand, finds Morag Preston

Photographs by Edina van der Wyck

Interior designer Emily Todhunter answers the door to her three-floor, six-bedroom Pimlico apartment, on the third floor of a stucco house, dressed in a mumsy tracksuit, straight from the school run. Leading the way through a book-lined hall, she brushes past a plaster-cast pair of boobs (by sculptress Katie Braine). 'Mine,' she hoots with laughter. 'I'm so vain, I pushed my arms back and leant against an ironing board to make them stick out.'

She is refreshingly un-precious. And tomboy pretty – petite, brunette, with a can-do attitude. Zipping from room to room, she attends to a steady stream of calls, discussing a new range of fabrics and arranging play dates for Olympia, her five-year-old daughter by her husband Manoli Olympitis, 54, chairman of



Pacific Media, which owns Asia's largest online shopping channel.

She regularly pops in to check up on Aleko and Mikey, the couple's nine-month-old twins. 'I hate it when they cry,' she says, leaning over their back-to-back cots. 'Poor Mikey, Mummy has revved him up, poor chap.' She has the vocab and vowels of an Enid Blyton adventurer.

A psychology graduate who trained as a painter, Todhunter, 39, made her name as an interior designer at the age of 23 when she transformed Madison Avenue's Au Bar from a dingy basement club into one of New York's hottest nightspots. Since then she has decorated some of London's smartest restaurants, including Daphne's, Christopher's, and Tamarind.

Her private clients include the Greek

millionaire Taki and Imran Khan (both of whom she dated), as well as Ghislaine Maxwell and Nigel Nicolson, who asked her to revamp his private quarters at Sissinghurst. It might sound high society, but she detests grandeur. 'There's no pretending that my job is faintly glamorous,' she says. 'I'm there with my Marigolds on, shouting instructions, jollying everyone along.'

In 1998, she joined forces with Kate Earle to form Todhunter Earle, a Chelsea-based design company which produces its own range of wallpapers and fabrics for Designers Guild (and now lamps, too). The pair are busy decorating a chalet in Switzerland, a super yacht, a big London town house and an 'enormous' country house in Northamptonshire.

Her own home is a blend of classic and

modern. 'I want it to look undecorated, comfortable and homey - not pretentious. It's all very laid-back and pared down.' She favours soft colours and comfortable sofas; a mix of antique hand-me-downs, flea-market finds and the odd commission. There are plenty of sentimental belongings: photographs of Manoli's family, glass phials handed down from her grandmother, bobbins from the silk factory owned by her friend Alessandro Pucci (of the Pucci family) who died in a car crash.

Brought up in Wantage, Oxfordshire, Todhunter, who studied philosophy and psychology at Bristol University, spent a large part of her life on the Greek island of Ithaca, where her parents still have a house (her father was in the City). She met Manoli, a former banking partner of Jonathan Aitken, at a dinner



Left: the business end of Emily's kitchen, designed by Alternative Plans. Originally a very small room, she had a wall knocked down in order to create a larger space where her family can relax and chat to her while she cooks.

Below: Olympia in front of the shelves that house her toys.

Bottom: Emily's neutral-toned mood-enhancing bedroom



the boys, she switches off her mobile and heads straight for the kitchen, which is more of a giant family room (albeit stylishly minimalist) with a large dining table and L-shaped sofa in front of a television. With large windows overlooking a leafy square, it is a restful backdrop to the buzz of activity. 'It was a tiny, hot sweat-pit of a kitchen so we had a wall knocked down,' she says. 'The most important thing when I'm cooking is that I can see everybody.'

Lined up next to the jars of pasta along the walnut cabinets is a large bust - this time of a boy's head topped off with a Yankees baseball cap. It is of John, Manoli's 21-year-old son from his first marriage to New York heiress Jan Cushing. 'He's in bed downstairs with his girlfriend,' Todhunter whispers.

The book-lined living room is Todhunter's concession to her husband's taste. The walls, covered in red velvet and gilt-framed prints of Greek ruins, give it the air of a gentlemen's club.

'My husband and I have very different tastes,' she says, hopping up on to one of his 'hideous chairs' in order to shut a window. 'You can't imagine how many little ashtrays and trinkets given to him by other girlfriends I had to get rid of.'

This room has a more traditional and grown-up feel to it than the rest of the flat, but

it is not too stifling. In one corner there is a giant Loewe TV and the chic aubergine glass lamps are from Todhunter's own collection. 'I don't like buying things for myself. I'm much more likely to have emotional things that have been handed down. I'm also not that fussed about things being obviously beautiful.'

The bedroom is where she finds peace - 'It puts me in a very good mood,' she says. 'It's not old-fashioned but it's not hard-edge modern either.' The ostrich-egg lamps from Valerie Wade sit on top of a £200 chest of drawers bought at auction - another Todhunter bargain. The Paul Belvoir sycamore dressing table is more pricey. He also designed her wall-to-wall wardrobe, which she cares more about than its contents.

'When I was in the hairdresser's, I saw my car being towed away and I got in such a bait, I went out and bought this,' she says, picking out a leaf-print blouse designed by her friend Allegra Hicks. 'When something goes wrong, I go shopping, although I'm happiest in a white T-shirt and Marks & Spencer floppy trousers.'

In January, she is launching a new range of lamps in glass and plaster. 'I've got a feeling the next move is towards dry, powdery things,' she predicts.

Whenever they can, Todhunter and her family escape to their farmhouse in Derbyshire. One day, they might even decamp to Greece for good. 'It could happen to us any time,' she says. Meanwhile, there is more than enough going on at home. 'We only have one rule in the house and that is you are not allowed to be bored. We are not allowed to even say the word.'

party in 1993. Their wedding, two years later, became tabloid fodder when, in the lead-up, ex-Bond Girl Marilyn Galsworthy claimed to be pregnant with Manoli's child, which he vehemently denied.

'My husband had the fleetingest affair with this really loopy woman a long time before I appeared on the scene,' Todhunter laughs. 'She mysteriously had a miscarriage after she was attacked in the street, but the police had no record of the mugging.' The couple sued and won.

'My life is all about the great juggling act,' says Todhunter. Back home by 6pm to feed